



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
UNDER AGENDA ITEM:**

The Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine

1556th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

5 March 2026

Mister Chair,

We remain deeply concerned by the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the immense human toll it continues to inflict each and every day, now for a fifth year in a row.

The scale and intensity of Russia's attacks remain alarming. In February of this year alone, Russian forces launched 288 missiles at Ukraine; the highest number of missiles launched at night in a single month since Ukraine began publishing such statistics in 2023. Behind these figures are human lives. As on every day since the start of this full-scale invasion, civilians are killed and injured as a direct result of Russia's aggression. Homes, schools, energy infrastructure, and medical facilities continue to be struck.

As discussions and diplomatic efforts aimed at ending this war are ongoing, what we see from the Russian side is contradictory to its stated commitment to peace. A genuine commitment to peace and a diplomatic solution is demonstrated through restraint, not expanded missile barrages. Negotiations remain essential and Russia needs to engage in meaningful compromise.

Mr. President,

These concerns sadly extend beyond our region. Russia has consistently portrayed itself as a partner to countries in the Global South. In November 2025, in an article about the 2025 Russia-Africa Summit, Foreign Minister Lavrov quoted President Putin "we have never been involved in the exploitation of African peoples."

However, reports emerging from several African governments and testimonies from affected individuals paint a different picture. They indicate that recruitment networks have lured thousands of African men to Russia with promises of civilian employment, only for them to be deployed to the front lines in Ukraine. Accounts suggest that visa arrangements were facilitated through official Russian channels, and that recruits signed contracts in a language they did not understand, in some cases receiving little or no military training before being sent into combat.

Authorities in Kenya have raised concerns that significant numbers of their citizens were recruited and exploited under false pretences. At least 8 have been confirmed to have died, while 18 have been repatriated. Ghana's Foreign Affairs Minister has publicly stated that several hundreds of Ghanaians have been drawn into the war since 2022 through similar deceptive practices, and underlined that at least 55 died while fighting, and two are currently held as prisoners of war. Nigeria's foreign ministry has likewise expressed grave concern over what it described as a rising and alarming trend of its citizens being unlawfully recruited.

In Bangladesh, authorities are investigating networks with alleged ties to Russian actors regarding similar practices with at least one returnee reporting that upon raising concerns about deployment to the front line, he was told by a Russian commander that he had effectively been sold and had no choice.

Monsieur le Président,

Un partenaire crédible ne trompe pas ses homologues.

Un partenaire crédible n'exploite pas les vulnérabilités économiques des populations de pays partenaires pour grossir les rangs de ses forces armées.

Un partenaire crédible n'attaque pas son voisin et ne cherche pas à renverser par la force le choix légitime de son peuple.

Dans toute notre région, en choisissant d'envahir l'Ukraine, la Russie met à mal des années de progrès, de stabilité et de prospérité durement acquis.

Ces antécédents devraient guider notre évaluation des affirmations de partenariat, de fiabilité et de crédibilité de la part de la Fédération de Russie.

C'est le comportement d'un perturbateur qui sape les fondements mêmes de notre sécurité.

Nous regrettons profondément que la Russie ait choisi la voie de la confrontation plutôt que celle du dialogue. La responsabilité de mettre fin à cette guerre incombe entièrement à l'État qui l'a déclenchée.

Monsieur le Président,

Permettez-moi de conclure en soulignant la Journée internationale des femmes, qui aura lieu ce dimanche 8 mars.

J'aimerais exprimer notre solidarité avec les femmes ukrainiennes, qui soutiennent leur pays sur le champ de bataille, dans la fonction publique, dans la société civile et au sein de leurs familles.

Nous saluons le travail des femmes de la délégation ukrainienne auprès de cette Organisation – Viktoria, Iryna, Tetiana, Olha, et Karina – dont nous respectons profondément le professionnalisme et la résilience.

Nous souhaitons également rendre hommage à la force et à la persévérance des femmes des familles des fonctionnaires de l'OSCE détenus. Nous rendons hommage à Margaryta Shabanova, qui n'a cessé de militer pour la libération des trois fonctionnaires de l'OSCE détenus illégalement par la Russie, dont son mari, Dmytro. Nous appelons la Russie à libérer les trois membres du personnel de l'OSCE détenus illégalement.

Leur courage nous rappelle que ce conflit continue d'avoir de profondes conséquences humaines, y compris pour notre propre Organisation et son personnel, et confirme le rôle essentiel du leadership des femmes dans le respect de nos engagements et la préservation de la paix.

Merci Monsieur le président.